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Anchor Gaming

More new "game-within-game" ideas

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Anchor Gaming's Randy Adams started the bonus slot craze almost single-handedly with "Wheel Of Gold" and "Wheel Of Fortune" in 1996. The latter game was a partnership between Anchor, for which Adams is marketing manager, and slot leader IGT.

Adams developed the wheel concept as one of several ideas to add secondary bonuses to reel-spinning slots—a concept which has since revolutionized the slot business. Every year since the Wheel, Anchor's competitors have watched the company's new releases, developed in partnership with one of several different slot manufacturers, to see if Adams' well of ideas has dried up.

And every year, Adams confounds them with innovation.

This has all been great for the slot business, bringing out the best in all the manufacturers as they one-up each other with new ideas.

This year, Anchor again lays down the gauntlet of challenge with a collection of innovative bonus games with themes reflecting a wide range of favorite American pastimes.

Pastimes like bowling.

Strike It Rich

Last year, Anchor introduced a bonus game called "Casino Bowling" that utilized an LED monitor in a bonus round of bowling frames. That game ultimately was pulled back by Anchor in favor of a better bowling game, on a better platform—the multimedia platform of Silicon Gaming's "Odyssey" slot.

The result is "Strike It Rich," a remarkable bonus slot that makes full use of the powerful computer capabilities of Silicon's Odyssey platform.

The base game is a 40-coin, three-reel buy-a-pay video slot featuring Silicon's unique configuration of eight pay lines—three horizontal, two diagonal and three vertical. The reel symbols are typical of the bowling-league culture—burgers, fries, beer and bowler characters.

"This is Anchor's first game in which the more you bet, the looser the game gets," says Adams. "As you bet more coins, you're buying the Strike Bonus, the Spare Bonus, diamond pays, corner pays and others."

"Diamond pays" and "corner pays" actually transform this into a ten-line slot; when they are activated, the player wins the pay table amount for combinations forming a diamond shape on the reels, or a combination on each of the top and bottom outside reels.

There are two main bonus games, triggered by lining up three "Strike Bonus" or "Spare Bonus" symbols on an active pay line. (The symbols are actually an "X" for a strike or a "P" for a spare, the bowling scorecard symbols.)

The screen then transforms into a live-action video representation of a bowling lane, from the perspective of a bowler standing behind the foul line ready to roll a frame. The player is given a "seed money" bonus, then three chances to make progressively harder spares, for progressively higher bonus amounts. For the first "roll," an easy spare is set up for the player. Just under the slot's button panel is a computer track-ball. The player uses the track-ball to actually lift the bowling ball on the video screen, aim and release it toward the pins.

The realism is incredible. Although the random number generator has already picked the bonus amount, the perception is that the player is controlling the ball. "If you roll it to the right, it hooks just as it would in reality," says Adams.

(He adds that Anchor petitioned Nevada regulators to permit modification of the game into a skill-based game. The request was denied on the basis that the payback percentage would vary according to how well a given player can bowl.)

If the player misses the spare, he is awarded the seed money and the screen switches back to the primary game. If he makes the spare, the seed money and first-level amount accumulate into the bonus award, and the video screen shows the mechanical pin sweeper and pin-setter come down to set up a more difficult spare, with a higher bonus amount.

If all three spares are made, the accumulated bonus award is tallied and the screen zooms in on the pin indicator (the display on a bowling lane on which dots indicate which pins are standing). The player is given the chance to gamble his winnings by picking one of the indicator dots for double or nothing. Half of the lights double winnings, half are "nothing."

Three "X" symbols on a lit pay line trigger the Strike Bonus round, which has the potential for the big bonus money. The RNG picks from three to seven frames in which the player can attempt to roll strikes. During this round, strikes are worth 20 coins apiece; any other roll gives the player one coin for every pin that falls.

At the end of the three-to-seven frame bonus round, the total score is tallied and the screen again zooms to the bowling lane's pin indicator board. The player is prompted to pick one of the dots, but this time they hide bonus multiplier amounts ranging from 5X to 25X. Thus, the top possible Strike Bonus is

3,500 coins—140 coins for seven strikes, with a 25X multiplier.

At press time, the Strike It Rich game was already approved in Nevada, with approval pending in New Jersey and other jurisdictions.

Solitaire and Monkey Business

In addition to partnering with Silicon Gaming, Anchor has forged what could be a long-term relationship with Casino Data Systems. This partnership already has launched several slot games in Atlantic City, where CDS last year secured approval of its "Bandit Series" multimedia video platform.

The first joint-venture games, offered as conversion kits and introduced at Resorts Atlantic City, are multiline video slots called "Beach Party" and "Road Trip," and a new video poker game called "Solitaire."

This latter game offers an innovative new video poker platform. It is a nickel or quarter game, accepting bets of five to 25 coins. However, the bets are for the individual cards rather than the hands—one to five coins per card. The hand is dealt just as in normal video poker, and the player then chooses the best potential hand or hands from the five cards, separating the hand into stacks of cards to look like a Solitaire game.

For example, if a player was dealt Ac As Ad 3h 4h, he would make two stacks—the three Aces and the suited pair.

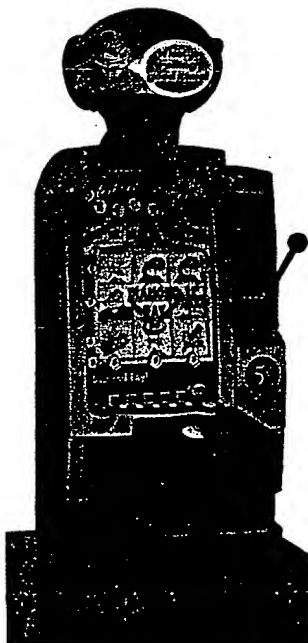
The player's per-card bet moves with the card. If the maximum five coins per card was wagered on the above example, the player would have 15 coins bet on the three Aces and 10 coins bet on the Three-Four combination after he stacked the cards.

The draw is then made to form complete five-card poker hands of the stacks. The draw is made from the remaining cards in a single 52-card deck (53 in the Joker version), and the player is paid separately for each hand. At press time, the Joker Wild version of the game was up and running at Resorts, and, according to Adams, a Bonus Poker version was soon to be released.

But the Anchor/CDS game perhaps destined to make the biggest splash this year is called "Monkey Business." It is a multiline video slot on the Bandit multimedia platform, available in an entire bank that forms what Adams calls a "complete slot environment."

The game, which was set to debut in August at Resorts and in Vegas shortly thereafter, is delivered in a "jungle environment" display. The bank of slots is surrounded by palm trees with transparent trunks holding

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If you hit the Witch Doctor, the character jumps over the game board in 3-D and returns your bet as a consolation prize. If you match three symbols, you win the corresponding

If it stops on a monkey, the nonmultiplied amount is added to the award. If it stops on a monkey all three times, a big-money random bonus award is added to the total. The Witch Doctor stops the game, but the player collects all bonuses accumulated to that point.

Each game has three separate bonus events. One is an accumulating bonus—a bonus jackpot accrues during normal play, until a special reel symbol lands and the player collects the bonus.

In "Superstar Wrestling," it's the male wrestlers vs. the female wrestlers, racing toward the championship belt.

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IGT Conversion Kits

Also at the trade show, according to Adams, Anchor will introduce a collection of conversion-kit video bonus games produced for IGT S-Plus slant-top slots. According to Adams, the kits transform a bank of games into an "attraction" similar to the CDS "Monkey Business" game, with LCD video screens in each top box and an overhead, attract-mode video display.

First among these will be "Video Jeopardy!" A reel trigger in the base game will send the player into a bonus "Jeopardy!" game, but unlike the MegaJackpots "Jeopardy!" slot, this bonus game incorporates elements of the real game used on the *Jeopardy!* television game show.

"It's the real, live game," says Adams. "You go into the Jeopardy bonus and up comes the game board. You select a category, and the computer selects a random bonus amount—such as 'Sports' for 30. Then, a real question from the category appears."

To keep the game based on random chance, the player is prompted to choose from three hidden answers by selecting one of the three "contestants" on the video screen. "Two are correct; one is incorrect," Adams explains.

Another new conversion kit is called "Roller Jam." According to Adams, the bonus game features live-action footage of

the "Roller Jam" television show, secured through licensing from the TNN cable network. "The bonus game is live-action video of the show," says Adams. "As you play the primary game, the screen plays live-action video highlights from the show, and there is a 'jam clock' superimposed on the screen. Every time you lose on the reels, time is added to the clock. Accumulating 60 seconds on the clock gets you to the bonus game."

He says this occurs every 10 to 15 spins. For the bonus round, the player selects a team member on the screen who is competing in the television show's "jam"—a rough-and-tumble race involving men and women on roller skates. Using a track ball, the player "becomes" the Roller Jam participant in the race, and the bonus amount corresponds to where the player finishes in the jam.

Other conversion kits by Anchor are designed to convert IGT S-Plus machines into Barcrest bonus games—the line of top-box bonuses designed by Barcrest, IGT's European subsidiary. "We go out and say, 'show us your worst-performing S-Plus machine,' and we convert it into a Barcrest game," Adams says.

All in all, it's a collection of new slot games diverse enough to make one's head spin. That is, until Anchor comes up with yet another new game collection for World Gaming Congress 2000. ♣



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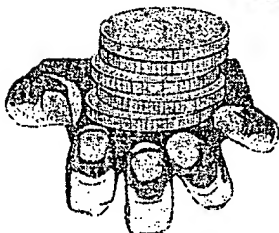
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